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The Archaeology of Heroes: Carlyle, Foucault and the Pedagogy of Interdisciplinary Narrative Discourse

Louise Campbell

This paper argues in favour of the beneficial currency of Thomas Carlyle's 'On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History' in three ways, each of which finds the basis of its critique in aspects of Foucault's theories of discursive practice, as explored in Foucault's theories of historical discourse; 1) that Carlyle's terminology connects with his discursive practice in an ambiguous manner, as his concept of worship is more akin to study than devotion, if we take the text of his lectures as evidence of his perception; 2) the sources of enlightenment Carlyle offers us, based on these studies of heroic individuals, may provide an exemplar for interdisciplinary scholarship centred around biographies of notable individuals, and finally; 3) we challenge the notion that heroes such as those Carlyle offers us can be manifest in the present and argue that the depth of insight Carlyle demonstrates into his subjects is only possible by means of a lengthy temporal transition: the historicity of these narratives, and the narratives of social codification, cultural development and long-term impact witnessed and described over generations, is what makes them feasible at all.

INTRODUCTION

Seeking to make sense of the past, drawing together a narrative from the many strands and instances of character, time, place and action, is a demanding occupation. As Foucault has

argued, history is not a set of irrevocable developments that gather momentum which are suddenly overturned after long periods of stability. Instead, he argues there are multiple 'networks of determination' (Foucault, 2002, p. 5) that may be read in different ways according to the context in which reading takes place. In Foucault's terms, when we discuss history, we are dealing with a shared discourse about the past through structures of thought that are unconscious. These forms of discourse operate on an archaeological plane rather than an epistemological one, in other words they seek out prevailing principles rather than underlying truths of history (Ball, 2013, p. 5). Viewed in this light, our community of belief and our system of thought governed by our communicative choices and how these are structured are what create our awareness of what we have and have not known through lived experience. This nebulous process in which meaning is created by piecing together historical fragments in significant ways is challenging, not least when we take the stance that in seeking to study history we are exposing and categorising data that are open to the idiosyncrasies of interpretation. Arguably, history is in great measure dependent on the experiences and learning of those who search it out, who imbue it with their own understanding of how people in the past thought, what motivated them and what they perceive the structural limitations of time and place to be (Rotberg, 2010). In this sense, we offer ourselves to history rather than having history reveal itself to us. Foucault characterises his approach to history as precisely the reverse of historicism. He does not enquire into universals by using history as a critical method, but comes to the project from the perspective that universal truths are illusory. His approach to history is, rather, one that asks what possibilities there are in terms of what we do with it, since it cannot be reduced to a rational process (Dodd, 2016, p. 30). Foucault suggests that our approach to history should be an experimental one, harnessing the potential of individuated pursuit and rejecting claims to global knowledge or legitimacy (Foucault, 2007, p. 114).

Learning from the past could be viewed, in this sense, as a peculiarly subjective and flexible form of knowledge.

One notable example of subjective historiography, Thomas Carlyle's 'On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History' (Carlyle, 2010[1897]), explores the lives of a range of historical figures, seeking to draw out aspects of their stories that describe significant and valuable points of learning for the scholar as well as for his students. A series of six lectures delivered in 1840, loosely linked by the idea that the individuals examined exemplify the habits, abilities and propensities which make them worthy of study, Carlyle's lectures offer a view of the process of subjective historical interpretation at work. The project, as Carlyle outlines it, is one that is necessarily incomplete and yet, as this discussion will suggest, offers a richness of pedagogical benefit regardless. The character and quality of this pedagogical wealth is one of the key focuses of scrutiny here.

In order to contextualise Carlyle's work on heroes, some consideration of prior analysis of this aspect of his thought offers intriguing insights into how he has been regarded in recent times. There is a dearth of interest in his methods or the logic that occasioned them, with a greater, though still limited, concentration on the ideological assumptions pervading his work. Critique of Carlyle's thinking on the topic of heroes has circled around numerous areas of debate. Some analysts focus on his conception of history as being enacted by key individuals, contrasting this with alternative views (Stambler, 2006), while some position Carlyle's thinking firmly within Romanticism (Harrold, 1963) seeing it as an extension of the prevailing cultural discourse of the time of writing. A number focus on issues of leadership and governance, where the characteristics of the individuals he looks at are considered in the light of modern ideas about charismatic, informed, confident leaders with vision, while others consider how Carlyle's ideas diverge from modern political ideals of identity and autonomy (Bossche, 1991; Spector, 2016; Steinweis, 1995), challenging the idea that a few individuals

should be allowed to take responsibility in the collective imagination for the grand sweep of history. Some simply see Carlyle's position as substanceless propagandist bluster, antithetical to the Modernist agenda of subjective selfhood (Shields, 2002), while others argue for a different viewpoint, seeing Carlyle's work on the hero poet as a precursor to Modernism's cultural heroism (Noel-Tod, 2013). Broader cultural analyses seek to undermine Carlyle's inherent patriarchy, pointing out that none of Carlyle's heroes are anything but male (Emig, 2003; Grint, 2011) and his paradox-laden religiosity which balances on a tightrope between scholarly research and personal faith (Bossche, 1991). To summarise, reading across the various strands of Carlyle commentary and analysis from recent decades, it becomes apparent that there are, for a modern reader, numerous sources of tension. This is perhaps, an inevitable result of the passage of time when considering the impressions, opinions and suggestions of a thinker who, however well educated, worked within a field of discourse that mirrored and reinforced the age in which he lived. It may also suggest something of the challenges associated with attempting, as Carlyle has, to encapsulate vast stretches of human history within the confines of six lectures.

Analysis in this paper is essentially conceived of as being hermeneutic in nature. By examining Carlyle's interpretation of the scientific, emotional, spiritual and socio-cultural value offered by his choice of subjects, it is suggested that his view is one that looks to the polyvalent influences of certain individuals on cultures and ways of seeing the world. The worth of these individuals, he seems to imply, is not in their perfections but rather in their catalysing influence. He characterises them as conduits through which mystical power flows. As the exploration of Carlyle's heroic narratives that follows will propose, this power is one that appears to be allied with synthesising the clarity of perception, ability to communicate, persuasive empathy and sphere of influence of the individuals in question.

If we trust Carlyle's intellectual integrity, these narratives may be seen as fascinating explorations of key figures in human history and culture in their own right. However, this is not the immediate focus of interest in this discussion. Rather, it is his beliefs about the importance of the subjects of his study and the implicit values he attributes to them that are the focus of attention. Carlyle's chosen mode of study, which is demonstrably subjective and indicative of a scholar following his personal interests rather than any empirical method, and the characteristics of his subsequent narration of his findings, is what interests us here. As we shall show, Carlyle draws inferences and creates scholarly connections that are sometimes startling in their clarity. On this basis, i.e. as a demonstration of academic research evidencing an hypothesis, these lectures arguably provide an engaging model of interdisciplinary biographical study. The discourse Carlyle offers us has the power to say much more than the words denote, providing 'plenitude and endless wealth' (Foucault, 2002, p. 134) in terms of scope for interpretation. The richness of the data Carlyle mines has an instructive value insofar as it creates and promotes links and lineages that are broad, dynamic, affirmative, convincing and therefore have the potential to be pedagogically powerful. His contemporaries were effusive in their praise of this influence on their thinking, recognising it as culture-forming and founded on an impressive knowledge base (Emig, 2003; Spector, 2016; Stambler, 2006). Consequently, a re-evaluation of Carlyle's role in helping us consider how to structure learning about the past from within our own moment in history may be timely.

With a view to reconsidering Carlyle's work in terms of how it may impact on modern educators and thinkers about education, this paper argues in favour of the beneficial currency of 'Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History' in three ways, each of which finds the basis of its critique in aspects of Foucault's theories of discursive practice; 1) that Carlyle's terminology connects with his discursive practice in an ambiguous manner, as his concept of hero worship is more akin to study than devotion, if we take the text of his lectures as evidence

of his perception; 2) the sources of enlightenment Carlyle offers us, based on these studies of heroic individuals, may provide an exemplar for interdisciplinary learning centred around biographies of notable individuals, and finally; 3) it challenges the notion that heroes such as those Carlyle offers us can be manifest in the present and argues that the depth of insight Carlyle demonstrates into his subjects is only possible by means of a lengthy temporal transition: the historicity of these narratives, and the social codification, cultural development and long-term impact witnessed and described over generations, is what makes them feasible sites of pedagogy at all.

SCHOLARSHIP AND WORSHIP: SANITY AND SOMETHING

In his opening remarks in the first lecture, on Hero as Divinity, Carlyle is at pains to point out the inherent difficulties of his project. To study the role and impact of great men on our lives is, he argues, a project so vast as to be 'illimitable' (Carlyle, 2010[1897], p. 1). This absence of boundaries creates a lack of certainty and a sense of contingency. He recognises here the encyclopaedic nature of studying the past, where causes and effects breed only more causes and effects, where one question answered raises yet another question. It is, in this sense, an endless and endlessly absorbing project. The quest to understand, to interpret what is past is, then, a pursuit destined to remain forever fluid. Foucault uses the term 'archaeology' to describe a similar enterprise; one which has the broad premise of querying 'the already-said' (Foucault, 2002, p. 148) at its most basic level. He recognises the impossibility of designating a moment of genesis or finality to this activity, seeing it instead as a never concluded, never entirely realised revelation of historical evidence. As a project, Foucault suggests historical interpretation can only ever be partial. Our historical knowledge is a reflection of our knowledge of the present and is therefore in an on-going state of development. Absolute

knowledge cannot exist because the historical archive is always conditional and unfinished. We are caught in a binary interaction that both unites us with our historical knowledge, as this is linked to the other forms of knowledge we have, and at the same time disconnects us because of the distancing, dispersing effect of time (Huffer, 2016, p. 104). Our understanding of the past shifts with our understanding of ourselves, our experiences and our articulations of them. Foucault advises that we ‘give up hope of ever acceding to a point of view that could give us access to any complete and definitive knowledge of what may constitute our historical limits’ (Foucault, 2007, p. 115).

For Carlyle, this problematic beginning is quickly subverted by happier considerations. To explore the lives of heroes is to undertake a valuable enterprise he advises; one that benefits us by default. If it is the case that, ‘[w]e cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him’ (Carlyle, 2010[1897], p. 1) then it seems likely that the deficient, cloudy lens of time need be no impediment to our learning. The study of our heroes is an opportunity to reach from the darkness of our ignorance towards the proverbial light of knowledge. Even a spark is worth the effort. This is, at base, a pedagogical venture, expected and intended to bring about enlightenment Carlyle suggests, to breed appreciation of the ‘divine relation (...) which in all times unites a Great Man to other men’ (p. 2). Carlyle’s characterisation of this ‘divine relation’ is paradoxically an interpersonal one, linking man to man. This implies that Carlyle’s conception of the nature of this learning is that it is primarily social and crucial to the on-going growth and development of our species. He claims the purpose and impact of a hero exists in their ability to stimulate thought in others. This thought then takes on a life of its own and ‘grows, in man after man, generation after generation’ (p. 21), in an epidemic of intellectual progress which only slows when overtaken by a newer, fitter mode of thought. Like Foucault’s description of *langage* which is subject to change both by rapid disturbance and by the unhurried progression of longer-term modification (Foucault,

2002, p. 158), Carlyle visualises the discourse of heroic impact as a function of communication, accruing status and import through continued usage across multiple contexts.

Counter to this seemingly structural perspective, Carlyle's discourse offers a contradictory thread when he argues for the ultimate unknowability of what is at the source of all we think we know and see: 'This world, after all our science and sciences, is still a miracle; wonderful, inscrutable, magical and more ...' (p. 8). Here is where the idea of worship is first offered as a mode of interacting with the lives of Great Men. The language of mystery employed obfuscates the empirical project. This is now not merely a pursuit of knowledge channelled to us through key figures from the past, it is also an article of faith.

For Foucault, the mysterious element that lies at the heart of any form of knowledge, bringing coherence and unity, is explicable only via the detachment of knowledge from the subjects of knowledge (Foucault, 1994). The relationship between these two is not, as Carlyle supposes, innately prefigured and configured in a divine plan. To perceive a model of order underlying all knowledge implies the necessity of a transcendental organising force but this becomes unnecessary when knowledge is reframed as an arbitrary human creation (Bardon and Jossierand, 2010; Dodd, 2016). While it is discomfiting to take the position that 'man is a finite, historical and empirical being that is dated and enfolded in the "discourses" of each epoch, rather than a transcendental one' (Ball, 2013, p. 22), Foucault's contention is that this is the state of affairs. When we accept knowledge as subjective and created by the social nature of human interactions manifested across a variety of contexts, the miraculous nature of the Great Man becomes something other than 'magical'. It becomes comprehensible within the contingent, liquid sphere of historical discourse.

While Carlyle does not presume to give a name to it, he insists that the 'unknowable' is not an absence. The heroic figure, and our study of him is, rather, 'to discern that the centre of it all [is] not a madness and nothing, but a sanity and something' (p. 26). For Carlyle, the hero

is a locus of meaning; a visible source of sense. The hero offers us a focal point through which we can connect diverse paths of knowledge because he has been seen to complete this same project first (either knowingly with intent or *post hoc*), creating the groundwork for others to then go on to lay a firmer or more direct course. In this way, the hero is a source of comfort and wisdom, an authority figure whose dominance is permitted via the same socio-cultural recognition of which he is an acknowledged foundation. The relationship is symbiotic: the hero feeds the culture and in so doing assembles an image of greatness, while the culture takes succour from the hero recreating this greatness by offering recognition of the hero's vitality in human affairs.

Foucault, too, suggests the importance of individual historical figures as authoritative sources of meaning. He proposes that such figures offer lucidity in terms of their ability to integrate the incongruities that necessarily accompany his archaeology:

There are coherences that one establishes at the level of an individual—his biography, or the unique circumstances of his discourse—but one can also establish them in accordance with broader guide-lines, one can give them the collective, diachronic dimensions of a period, a general form of consciousness, a type of society, a set of traditions, an imaginary landscape common to a whole culture. In all these forms, a coherence discovered in this way always plays the same role: it shows that immediately visible contradictions are merely surface reflections: and that this play of dispersed light must be concentrated into a single focus (Foucault, 2002, p. 167).

It is the notable individual's capacity to integrate the complexities of a time, a place, an incident, a series of effects, a manner of speaking and a mode of thinking which creates this

focus. The 'sanity and something' of which Carlyle speaks is paralleled in Foucault's 'coherence'. The hero's value lies in this ability to rationalise and integrate a number of disparate discourses, to filter complex and diverse streams of knowledge into a single receptacle. This unifying, combinatory force is what gives notable individuals their distinction but it also opens up a further question of how this quality becomes recognisable.

The identification of a singular entity more worthy of study than all the other entities around it requires, at the very least, some form of evaluative filtration. This is where the lines between scholarship and hero worship become imprecise. We must decide what is worthy and what is not. While scholarship implies rigour, focus, a pursuit of knowledge, worship, in its intellectual sense, implies the same but with the addition of reverence, adoration and glorification. How are we, as scholars, to discern the difference between what we study and what we worship? Must we, as students of notable individuals in history, necessarily maintain a deferential stance? Is it only through adoration that true appreciation can be found? In his second lecture on the Hero as Prophet, Carlyle argues for the necessity of perceiving a greater power in all matters; 'Man cannot know (...) unless he can worship in some way. His knowledge is a pedantry, and dead thistle, otherwise' (p. 70). Implied here is the notion that knowledge in its deepest sense is predicated on a spiritual or perhaps emotional devotion to the subject of study. This suggests meaningful learning through hero worship can only happen in an atmosphere of veneration. This creates an exclusive aura around this form of learning, yet Carlyle's framing of this idea offers a way to circumnavigate the problem. Our knowledge is founded on our ability to worship 'in some way', which suggests a lack of prescription. We may worship in a manner appropriate to ourselves. While Carlyle's worship has its foundations in the Christian tradition, as his numerous references to a deity attest, not every student need follow the same path. Indeed, Carlyle offers a modification of his own terms: to worship is to 'admire without limit' (p. 11). The quality of our scholarship, the worthiness of our endeavour,

can be measured in how much it matters to us, how much value we accord the study and in what manner we use what we learn.

Looked at in this light, the worship Carlyle speaks of may be regarded as a recognition of, and perhaps also gratitude for, the roles, skills, talents and consequence he perceives to be embodied in the individuals he chooses to study. Hero worship, in this broader sense, need not be coterminous with humble supplication. Scholarship and study, driven by an earnest desire to learn, to pass on learning and to build on it for the betterment of humankind, may also be seen as a form of humanist exaltation. Regarded in this way, scholarship and worship may be seen as closely related and therefore open to any and all learners interested in pursuing such a form of study.

LINKS WITH PAST HUMANITY: WORLDWIDE VERSUS WORLD-DEEP

Perhaps consideration of the purpose of our worship/scholarship can help us assess Carlyle's intentions more fully. On examination of Carlyle's comments in his first lecture, it appears that the benefits we gain from studying Odin's role in Norse mythology do not come from our regard for his godhood. Carlyle, as a devout Christian, does not appear to be arguing for his audience to turn away, even briefly, from the Christian God and follow the ancient Norse. Rather, he proposes that learning comes from our appreciation of Odin's role in unifying disparate experiences, peoples and ways of seeing the world. He discusses Odin's role as a cultural sense-maker. He is an articulator of the universe (pp. 21–22), an everyman figure offering exemplification of how to live and die and a conquistador uniting geographical and tribal divergence (p. 23). He is also the inventor of written communication (p. 24) and deals in other, very earthbound, concerns. Looked at as a body of related comments, Carlyle's narrative of Odin as a heroic figure demonstrates that the benefits of our study come from our

appreciation of him as a locus of meaning for a past culture that we can still connect with as a result of his existence, whether this existence is literal or figurative. Our veneration is not for the divine in this hero but rather for his ability to link us with past humanity.

Similarly, the benefits we gain from studying Dante or Shakespeare come, not from our consciousness of a divine hand at work in their writing, but rather from perceiving their surpassing skill with words and ideas, and their remarkable facility for communicating the human condition, the nature of which has not greatly changed in the centuries since they lived and worked. The Hero Poet provides a textual locus of knowledge that facilitates, indeed encourages, hermeneusis. Of Dante, Carlyle says, 'He is world-great not because he is worldwide, but because he is world-deep' (p. 92). This depth may be characterised as an intensity of perception, a clarity of vision, an understanding that is expressed in such a way that anyone at any time can make sense of it, recognise it, internalise it and learn from it. Carlyle says all men exhibit some traces of the universal in their lives but great poets have the added dimension of 'infinitude' (p. 82). Their work transcends time and is open to endless interpretation. He argues their greatness is spread by a process not dissimilar from natural selection; ideas survive by gaining strength and currency through repetition. What is interesting, profound, stimulating or simply identified as true and important, survives by social transfer in a progression which Carlyle calls 'the unguided instinct of the world' (p. 85). Some ideas, discoveries, achievements and other significant occurrences survive the filtering of time, in which the ephemera of the majority of individual experiences are washed away. Those that survive this filtering long enough become stronger, so that over time repetition and reinforcement leads to an increase in perception of their value, culminating in their 'beatification' (p. 85). These ideas become more powerful, more precious and more significant because of their durability, leading to the discernment of the 'world-deep' universality they convey. The subtext here is one of social selection and cultural codification. It is people who,

through successive generations, have canonised these figures and the ideas, events and works associated with them, not God. It appears the unique value of Carlyle's heroes lies in their status as figurative historical texts through which the past can be interpreted. This brings us, logically, to consider what he makes of literal historical texts.

In his exploration of the importance of the Hero as Man of Letters, Carlyle's pedagogical project takes what might be considered a long overdue look at the material substance of history. He describes the value of printed matter, which lies in its ability to be reproduced across centuries, connecting a reader today directly with a semblance of the past; 'in Books lies the soul of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream' (p. 160). The record that books offer us, the tangible link to an otherwise largely invisible history, is an invaluable resource, cataloguing all that humanity has made, considered or achieved. Again, Carlyle employs the language of the arcane in his rhetoric: '[n]o magic Rune is stranger than a book' in which all our knowledge lies 'in magic preservation' (p. 160). This 'magic', like the miraculous nature of the Great Man, lies in its potency. In the same way that Carlyle's great men are powerful foci of interdisciplinary knowledge, so too the material archive is a powerful resource, combining the learning and thoughts of the writer and consolidating this within its pages, across the reaches of both time and space.

The writers of such works are, for Carlyle, the strident, striving voices of their time. They sometimes coalesce the spirit of the age and sometimes battle against it, reaching for some greater truth or meaning beyond the present, seeking to disclose the reality of their experience and understanding, and signify an alternative for the common man to the prevailing hegemonic discourse. In our study of such figures and their works, Carlyle asks that we consider not simply the words themselves but also the context of their production. Taking the example of Johnson, he argues that the heroic nature of his work is, at least in part, due to his ability to transcend

the spirit of his age, namely the utilitarianism and industrialism that pervade 18th century culture. Johnson is, for Carlyle, an Original Man: 'The essence of originality is not that it be new: Johnson believed altogether in the old; he found the old opinions credible for him, fit for him; and in a right heroic manner lived under them' (pp. 179–180). Carlyle's narrative of Johnson shows us a man who, by bringing his inquiring mind, his personal faith and his significant intellectual confidence to bear on his work, is able to live in an age of social upheaval and mediate its deleterious effects through this work. In this way, Carlyle enhances his conception of the hero still further, broadening the definition to encompass philosophical strength in the face of a tide of cultural adversity. This form of hero encourages us to look beyond the superficialities of what is culturally accepted and promulgated, to create and live by systems of values that are our own, genuinely meaningful to us and deeply held. In this sense, such heroes offer us exemplars of self-determination and autonomy, providing models of how to rise above social pressure, how to articulate and stand by our personal beliefs, maintaining our individuality, while still operating effectively within a social system.

To summarise, closer analysis of Carlyle's lectures demonstrates that the purpose of studying heroes is primarily for social benefits; to help us make sense of key aspects of social existence, to share vital 'truths' of a universal kind which Foucault would deny, to communicate modes of thought and behaviours that aid social cohesion and to link individuals to a continuity of human experience. The function of hero-worship, in Carlyle's visualisation, is both epistemological and ontological. Essentially, it is a form of human interaction across time, pedagogical, interdisciplinary, holistic and comforting because of the coherence rendered with the aid of hindsight.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVES: THE ILLUSION OF COHERENCE

Carlyle's heroes offer their most persuasive pedagogical force as the focus of narratives created with the necessary problem of temporal distance. These narratives may be embellished, biased, at some points largely fictional but if they cohere sufficiently well, they offer a credibility that allows learning to take place across, between and through a range of disciplines. This interdisciplinary credibility may be regarded as a function of the passage of time, as linkages across disciplines are not always visible in the present. As a pedagogic site, narrative offers not only scope for interpretation through the variable interplay of narrative and linguistic elements but also involves a process that can lead to learning which is transformative in the sense that it has the capacity to change how the learner sees her/himself through the identification and articulation of personally relevant connections with the narrative's subject (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Souto-Manning, 2014) Such a process is rendered more complex when the perceiver is seeking connections between incomplete events, instances or viewpoints, as it is difficult to firmly situate oneself in the midst of shifting sands. The historical perspective, generated by the passage of time, helps build 'a better sense of how we come to be beings with the history we have' so that we may develop 'a better sense of how it is that we are supposed to go on' (Gamez, 2013, p. 91).

Foucault, too, recognises the value of narrative as a grounding, uniting principle, and seems to argue for the necessity of narrative in the broadest sense when interpreting history, seeing linked articulations as a natural expression of thought. When dealing with what is in the distant past, solid, enduring data are thin on the ground and can be difficult to locate. Consequently, they are often pulled into totalities fused together by 'exegesis, commentary, and the internal proliferation of meaning' (Foucault, 2002, p. 135). The act of interpretation and then articulating that interpretation in narrative form is essentially a creative process which unites disparate elements of meaning (Reynhout, 2013, p. 149). This is a productive aspect of the process of historiography but one that is fraught with challenges for a scholar with serious

pretensions to objectivity, since the characteristics of exegesis and narration are each infused with subjectivity and therefore must in some measure embody hegemonic and ideological positions.

Carlyle recognises this idea in his discussion of Men of Letters, shying away from analysis of those writers whose influence is readily identifiable in the here and now, perhaps in part because existing ideological positions, clearly discernible in the present, offer greater challenges in terms of suiting the hero to the hero-worshipper's needs. Contemporary heroes are too familiar and insufficiently distant to facilitate the kind of inventive appreciation required by Carlyle's heroic project. It is too early to tell whether certain figures will demonstrate the long-term universality and appeal, the 'world-deep' communicative capacity, he sees in his chosen heroes but one day in the far future their influence, their 'palpably articulated, universally visible power', may be recognised (p. 165). This is, perhaps, Carlyle's most revealing comment, casting his ideas about pedagogy in a pleasingly constructivist light. It implies that his heroes are the creations of narratives that come into being through the act of scholarship/worship. Their socio-cultural impact is the outcome of this process of narration. For a life to make sense to those piecing it together from historical fragments, it must be regarded in narrative terms (Erben, 2000). For its strategic impact to be narrated, the many different strands of its reach must be studied and connected by a directed and resourceful logic. We may see this as a creative enterprise, as much as an epistemological one. It requires insight, the ability to perceive links, to unearth unexpected effects, to see the parallel interrelations across and between spheres of influence. In this way, an historical biography may be regarded as a corollary of study, rather than a fact of history.

This sense of the evolving, dynamic heroic subject narrated by the scholar leads to a reframing of Carlyle's project. His exploration of heroic figures in history ceases to be an objective analysis of simple causes and effects. It rematerialises as, rather, a coalescence of

insights, knowledges and understandings located within the scholar, blended and interlinked through the centralising influence of the on-going 'becoming' of the subject (Deleuze, 1995). His erudition is his own, in the same way that every student's learning experience is individual. A brief review of Carlyle's interests and education may be opportune at this point.

Carlyle himself had a somewhat unsystematic education. He had a diverse range of interests and studied languages, history and divinity before becoming a mathematics teacher which perhaps goes some way to explaining the breadth and cast of his scholarship in connection with his chosen heroes. The view of history he espouses is simultaneously limited (by his choice of focal points) and comprehensive (in the influence he ascribes to his subjects), providing a simplistic model of history viewed as the ripples on the pond of continuous human experience created by identifiably significant individuals. Within this framework, his rhetoric is articulate, wide-ranging and perhaps the more persuasive and engaging for its lack of systematisation (Emig, 2003). The internal contradictions of his work may cause us to question his methodology, and it is clear that his methods deviate markedly from the model of historiography utilised by scholars today, yet within the scope of his defined intentions there is a rationality that was influential in his own time and remains appealing. What Carlyle offers us is a method for learning about history that straddles the traditional boundaries of scholarship, encouraging interdisciplinary curiosity and harnessing our cognitive desire to create bonds between the diverse facets of our knowledge.

The appeal of this kind of project lies in its dimensions as perhaps naïve but undoubtedly sincere scholarship, in the sense that it leads us towards a form of history that does not purport to be anything other than contingent and subjective. For Foucault, the mission of the historian is to establish a rule that governs how and why some statements or discursive formations appear and are noticed while others do not and are not. Our job as scholars is 'not to give voice to the silence that surrounds them (...) but to define a limited system of presences' (Foucault, 2002,

p. 134). The consciousness of such 'presences' is necessarily encumbered with an analogous consciousness of all that is missing from them. Historical discourse is not a budding flower waiting to be brought into full, visible bloom by analysis and interpretation. It is a scattering of petals, a distribution of fissures and spaces, restrictions and partitions that can only create an illusion of coherence by means of the perceiving subject's agency. The gathering of fragments of data cannot hope to recreate the experiential time of the historical subject, nor should it expect to be able to represent it in this manner; it is not possible to accurately recreate an individual's history because the temporal aspect of discourse cannot do justice to 'the obscure time of thought' (Foucault, 2002, p. 138). What we are left with, then, is an aporia-laden, atemporal representation of our interpretation of incomplete data. It could be argued that Carlyle's heroes are no more and no less than this. His heroic project acknowledges that much is absent from the picture but argues that what is present is enough to be intellectually provocative and therefore productive.

IMPLICATIONS

Read through the lens of Foucault's ideas about historical discourse, Thomas Carlyle's 'On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History' can be seen as a shrewd and self-conscious exploration of the impact of certain historical individuals on the writer's culture. While the pious hyperbole and sometimes bombastic tone of Carlyle's writing may generate critique, the scholarly logic of his work invites this view. His analyses are manifestly erudite, drawing on philology, philosophy, mythology, archaeology, religious texts, classical texts and many other documentary sources, weaving a complex tapestry from the threads of influence he perceives his heroes to tangle. His heroes' biographies are engaging, carefully constructed narratives,

demonstrating a polymath's breadth of knowledge, gleaned as a result of thorough, engaged, interdisciplinary scholarship.

Carlyle's scholarship may be regarded as a system of interrelationships, linked by his own perception, which is, in turn, created by his academic interests and philosophical concerns. The quality of his scholarship does not appear to be constrained by his religious bias or personal perspective; rather, these add to the trustworthiness of the work, permitting us to see something of the cognitive process Carlyle goes through in order to generate, develop and articulate his findings. This affords us a doubly rich source of knowledge. We learn not only about the perceived impacts of the historical figures under analysis but also about Carlyle himself, since he does not pretend to disguise the subjective idiosyncrasies of his personal stance.

By presenting us with fleshed out chronicles of heroic lives, often with digressions and subplots that are as absorbing as the central narrative, Carlyle demonstrates the value of focusing scholarship on biographical research. The process of concentrating learning on a single individual's life opens up a breadth of scope that is inevitably cross-disciplinary and therefore has the potential to be pedagogically fertile. This tenacious interdisciplinarity is an integrated part of the whole; to separate the elements is to 'murder to dissect' (Randall, 2012, p. 279). Carlyle's value as a modeller of historical biographical investigation lies in his embracing of the seamless and potentially unbounded character of this form of study. This biographical strategy provides a clear route to cross-disciplinary learning, while simultaneously suggesting a myriad of possibilities in terms of learning destinations. The end point of such work is, as Carlyle notes from the outset, 'illimitable' which makes it a bountifully diverse strategy in terms of creating pedagogical opportunity.

The fundamental message Carlyle asks us to appreciate, based on interpretation of the data available to him on the lives of his chosen heroes, is one of communication and connection. He offers these lives as models of communicative authority, which are capable of associating

past with present, networking person to person in an atemporal web of collective human understanding. While this proposal breeds difficulties in terms of the adoption of a unified vision of what this collective understanding may represent, it opens the door to individualised learning, offering an acceptance of the value of subjectivity in interpretation. Interpretation of historical data is a synergistic activity, where the interpreter brings a wealth of cognitive baggage to the process, thereby amplifying the creation of significance in the data. Consequently, the quality of the data's semantic value lies in the perceiving subject's foreknowledge. We see more when we know more. It is an unavoidably self-differentiating scholarly activity.

By synthesising his analysis of his chosen heroes' impact through interdisciplinary narrative discourse, Carlyle demonstrates multiple levels of knowledge about his subjects. He shows, i) factual awareness, in the sense of recognising documented events in his narrative, ii) empathetic awareness, where emotional impacts are considered and assessed for value, iii) interdisciplinary awareness of the reach and applicability of ideas, iv) cultural awareness, where language and discourse itself is under analysis, and v) structural awareness, where patterns or models of experience and cognition are considered. This multifaceted narrative discourse creates broad dimensions of authority that typify the vigour of the undertaking. A pluralistic and polysemous approach to scholarship such as this may lack defined boundaries or specified outcomes but Carlyle's work suggests this is a positive attribute; one which invites the learner to embark on a natural and distinctive educational journey.

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